minimise delays, reduce multiplicity of rules and regulations and infrastructural bottlenecks etc. These recommendations have been referred to the concerned Agencies/Departments for implementation/follow up within specific time frame.

Taxshield Saving Scheme launched by Kothari Pioneer Mutual Fund, AMC Ltd. Chennai

5404. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have given permission to Kothari Pioneer Mutual Fund AMC Ltd. N.H. Road, Chennai to launch its taxshield savings scheme;

(b) whether according to newspaper advertisements, investors were allowed a rebate of 20% and tax-free dividend if invested upto 31st March, 2000;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether this company have not given NAV to a large number of investors having deposited cheques on 31st March, 2000; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor and whether any instructions have been given to the company for giving tax-rebate/dividends to investors having deposited cheques on 31st March, 2000?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) The offer document of Kothari Pioneer Taxshield Scheme has been cleared by the market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in accordance with SEBI regulations.

(b) and (c) Kothari Pioneer Mutual Fund had issued certain advertisements stating *inter-alia*, that all investments in the Kothari Pioneer Taxshield Scheme before 31.3.2000, shall be eligible for a tax free dividend and 20% tax rebate.

(d) and (e) According to SEBI, Kothari Pioneer Mutual Fund has confirmed that all valid applications received by them along with cheques/drafts towards subscription till 31st March 2000 have been allotted units at the NAV of that date.

Benches of BIFR

5405. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number and details of cases of industrial sickness pending with

BIFR;

(b) the reasons for pendency of these;

(c) the number of benches of BIFR functioning at present;

(d) the reasons for curtailing benches; and

(e) the steps taken for speedy disposal of cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) was set up under the provisions of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 with a view to tackle the issue of industrial sickness in an effective manner, to secure timely detection of sick and potentially sick companies owning industrial undertakings, speedy determination by BIFR of the preventive, ameliorative, remedial and other measures which were required to be taken with respect to such companies and the expeditious enforcement of the measures so determined. BIFR mechanism, however, has not been completely successful in effectively tackling the problem of industrial sickness. Major reasons for this *inter-alia* include restrictive definition of sickness, excessive protection of sick industrial companies under section 22 of SICA for automatic stay on all proceedings, slow and dilatory BIFR procedures and excessively long time taken for disposal of cases etc. It has been reported by BIFR that as on 31.12.1999 BIFR and AAIFR/Supreme Court had approved/sanctioned 616 and 27 Rehabilitation Schemes respectively. As on 31.12.99 BIFR had 1003 cases pending at different stages of enquiry.

(c) At present three benches of BIFR are functional comprising six members including the acting Chairman.

(d) and (e) Government is presently evaluating the functioning of BIFR mechanism and operation of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 with a view to find out ways to tackle the problem of Industrial Sickness in a more effective manner.

Five per cent cut on Debt Relief claims of Bihar

†5406. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that five per cent standard cut has been made on all debt relief claims of Government of Bihar;

(b) if so, what are the details fo the losses suffered on this account by

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.